



McCauley Ranch/Crocker Ridge Wilderness Suitability Assessments

McCauley Ranch is a former working ranch which borders the Stanislaus National Forest located approximately 1/2 mile southwest of Foresta. A road and a utility line bisect this area. It is separated from Yosemite's Wilderness by approximately 2 miles.

Crocker Ridge is located along the park's western boundary, south of the Big Oak Flat Entrance Station. This parcel contains a segment of the Big Oak Flat Road and was added to Yosemite National Park so that the road would be entirely within the park boundary rather than going in and out of national forest lands. It is separated from Yosemite's Wilderness by approximately 2/3 of a mile.

What is this project about?

Yosemite National Park is assessing two land additions to determine if they are suitable to be studied for Wilderness designation. The first unit consists of 185 acres known as the McCauley Ranch. The second unit, known as the Crocker Ridge Addition is 253 acres. These areas will be evaluated according to whether or not they meet the criteria established by the 1964 Wilderness Act.

What is the assessment process?

Under National Park Service policy, a wilderness suitability assessment will consist of a careful inventory of the affected park land. Criteria are applied to determine whether the lands are suitable for further study of their wilderness qualities.

The public is notified of the process, inviting public comments and concerns (current stage). A draft assessment is composed by the Superintendent and sent to the Regional Director. The Regional Director sends it to the Director of the National Park Service. When approved by the Director, the determination is published in the Federal Register.

Currently, the National Park Service in Yosemite is awaiting a decision from the Director's office in Washington DC.

If the land is found to be suitable, a full study will ensue to determine possible designation as Wilderness by Congress. If it is found unsuitable, the wilderness review process will end. Public comment may be sent to the Director at this point if desired.

What does the 1964 Wilderness Act say about suitability characteristics?

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-577, Section 2. (c)) states

“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition and which

- 1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of humans’ work substantially unnoticeable,
- 2) the area has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation,
- 3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its recreation and use in an unimpaired condition,
- 4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”

What criteria are used to determine suitability?

National Park Service Management Policies state that lands will be considered suitable for wilderness if they are:

- 1) undeveloped or roadless,
- 2) 5,000 acres or more in size,
- 3) or of sufficient size to make practicable their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition,
- 4) and if they possess wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act.

Public Participation

The status of this and other Yosemite National Park improvement projects will be periodically updated on the park’s planning web site. Visit online: www.nps.gov/yose/planning.